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ABSTRACT

The effects of the use of traditional series readiness workbooks and subsequent delay in beginning reading instruction on reading achievement at the middle and end of first grade were investigated. Fifty-seven percent of the children in a suburban school district used traditional readiness workbooks and of the remaining 43%, some used non-series readiness workbooks that taught sounds but not words. A stratified random sampling procedure assigned one readiness class and one reading class to each of three schools. Teacher volunteers were correspondingly classified. Those in the readiness programs were told that they must use the readiness workbooks for six weeks during which there was to be no formal reading instruction, and those who were reading class teachers were told to begin formal reading instruction using pre-primers with all children. Both formal and informal reading ability pre-tests showed that there were no statistical differences between the groups. The results showed that the use of traditional reading readiness materials in first grade is not only valueless, but may even retard reading progress. On the other hand, regular reading instruction is valuable and should not be denied any child. (TA)

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THE EFFECT OF THE USE OF READING READINESS* MATERIALS IN THE FIRST GRADE

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Literally, tons of reading readiness materials are consumed in American schools each year.

In the suburban district where this study was carried out, 57% of the population used traditional readiness workbooks that accompany a basal series. Of the remaining 43% some used non-series readiness workbooks that taught sounds but not words.

Beyond the economic considerations and forest conservation problems is the raw instructional time consumption. In the year prior to the study, 35% of the first-grade children had 2-3 weeks of readiness, 28% started reading 4 to 8 weeks after school opening, and 37% delayed reading 9 or more weeks (5% until February and 4% until March or later).

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the use of these traditional series readiness workbooks and subsequent delay in beginning reading instruction had on reading achievement at the middle and end of first grade.

Teachers were asked to volunteer for the experiment. A stratified random sampling procedure randomly assigned one readiness class and one reading class to each of three schools. Readiness teachers were told that they must use the readiness workbooks for six weeks during which time there was to be no formal reading instruction (no words taught or preprimers used). The reading class teachers were told to begin formal reading instruction using preprimers with all children. Regular supervisory visits showed that this occurred.

Pretests of IQ (TOGA), Metropolitan Reading Readiness, and informal reading ability tests showed that there were no statistical differences between the groups.

When the groups were tested in January, 16 weeks after the beginning of the experiment, on the Stanford Achievement Test, the

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Readiness trained group was significantly inferior to the Reading Only Group in Word Reading and Word Study Skills. There was no significant difference in Paragraph Meaning. At the end of the year, late May, the same trend continued. Results on the Gates MacGinitie showed the Readiness Group to be significantly inferior in Vocabulary and there was no significant difference in Comprehension.

We looked at the January scores in terms of who was "ready to read" by scores on the Metropolitan Readiness Test. Students' scores were grouped into the top 31% and bottom 31% according to national norms with a middle group in between. High scorers and the middle group did significantly better than the Reading Only Group (.01 level) in Words Study Skills and otherwise, there were no significant differences between the Readiness Trained Group and the Reading Only Group.

Despite a few initial objections, teachers did not report significant problems in starting beginning reading with all pupils. They were not told readiness or IQ test scores and were forbidden to use subjective judgment on who was "ready" or "not ready."

Similar results were seen when the children were divided into higher and lower IQ groups. There was a tendency for the readiness trained group to be inferior readers in both the higher (IQ 102 and higher) as well as in the lower (IQ 101 and lower) groups. This tendency reached significance in Word Study Skills (.01 level).

The same trend was seen when scores were looked at in terms of older and younger children, (the median age was 6 years and 6 months) and when boys and girls' scores were separated.

There was a consistent tendency for children who scored higher on IQ and readiness tests and for older children to read better in both the readiness and the reading training groups, but no trend could be noted in sex differences. These subgroups were not analyzed for statistically significant differences.

It is perhaps somewhat encouraging to find that children seem to learn what they are taught. Children who did not have readiness training had more hours of reading training and made more progress in their regular reading books.

We conclude that the use of traditional reading readiness materials in first grade is not only valueless, but may even retard reading progress. Furthermore, these materials and the instruction time spent on them is not even valuable to those students who score low on reading readiness tests or who score low on IQ tests.

What is valuable is regular reading instruction and no first grade child should be denied this instruction based on the scores of a reading readiness test, an IQ test, his age, or the subjective judgment of a teacher.

TABLE 1

READING ACHIEVEMENT RAW SCORES OF READINESS TRAINED AND READING ONLY GROUPS

Test	Readiness trained group			Reading Only group			Mean difference	t	Significance
	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.			
Stanford - January Achievement									
Word Meaning	68	11.8	4.99	69	14.0	6.63	2.2	2.18	*
Paragraph Meaning	68	9.5	5.10	69	10.8	7.42	1.3	1.18	N.S.
Word Study	68	27.1	6.48	69	32.2	9.17	5.1	3.74	**
Gates MacGinitie - May									
Vocabulary	64	31.8	10.6	67	35.6	9.6	3.8	2.2	*
Comprehension	64	19.7	7.2	67	21.1	8.1	1.4	1.0	N.S.

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.
**Statistically significant at the .01 level.

TABLE 2

STANFORD READING ACHIEVEMENT RAW SCORES SEPARATED BY HIGH, AVERAGE AND LOW READINESS GROUPS

Metropolitan Readiness Test Group	Reading Trained Group N	Reading Trained Group Mean	Non-Reading Trained Group N	Non-Reading Trained Group Mean		Signif.
		WORD READING				
High Readiness	40	13.1	36	16.2	t	NS
Average Readiness	16	9.6	26	12.9	t	NS
Low Readiness	12	10.3	7	8.3	U	NS
		PARAGRAPH MEANING				
High Readiness	40	10.4	36	13.1	t	NS
Average Readiness	16	9.1	26	9.2	t	NS
Low Readiness	12	7.4	7	4.9	U	NS
		WORD STUDY SKILLS				
High Readiness	40	29.7	36	35.3	t	.01
Average Readiness	16	24.6	26	30.0	t	.01
Low Readiness	12	22.0	7	24.9	U	NS

Readiness Score Groups were top 31%, average 38% and Low 31% of test standardization group.

TABLE 3

READING ACHIEVEMENT SCORES OF READINESS AND NON-READINESS TRAINED GROUPS ACCORDING TO INTELLIGENCE

Test	Intelligence group	Readiness trained group N	Mean	S.D.	Non-readiness trained group N	Mean	S.D.	Mean difference	t	Significance
Pretest Metropolitan Readiness Test	Higher [a]	34	68.8	10.0	31	68.1	12.1	.07	.25	N.S.
	Lower [b]	34	53.5	16.9	38	58.5	10.5	5.0	1.56	N.S.
Posttests- January Stanford Achievement Test: Word Reading	Higher	34	12.5	5.4	31	15.7	6.7	3.2	2.13	N.S.
	Lower	34	11.0	4.6	38	12.8	5.9	1.8	1.50	N.S.
Stanford Achievement Test: Paragraph Meaning	Higher	34	9.5	5.3	31	12.1	7.9	2.6	1.62	N.S.
	Lower	34	9.5	4.9	38	9.7	6.8	.2	.14	N.S.
Stanford Achievement Test: Word Study Skills	Higher	34	29.4	6.9	31	34.8	9.3	5.4	2.70	**
	Lower	34	24.8	5.1	38	30.1	8.4	5.3	3.31	**

[a] I.Q. on Test of General Ability 102 and higher.

[b] I.Q. on Test of General Ability less than 102.

** Statistically significant at the .01 level.

TABLE 4

READING ACHIEVEMENT SCORES OF READINESS AND NON-READINESS TRAINED GROUPS ACCORDING TO CHRONOLOGICAL AGE

Test	Age group	Readiness trained group N	Mean	S.D.	Non-readiness trained group N.	Mean	S.D.	Mean difference	t	Significance
Pretest Metropolitan Readiness Test	Older[a]	26	64.38	13.2	27	67.44	10.9	3.06	.78	N.S.
	Younger[b]	42	59.21	16.8	42	59.80	12.4	.59	.18	N.S.
Posttests - January Stanford Achievement Test: Word Reading	Older	26	12.3	5.1	27	14.0	5.4	1.7	1.21	N.S.
	Younger	42	11.5	4.3	42	14.2	6.9	2.7	2.07	N.S.
Stanford Achievement Test: Paragraph Meaning	Older	26	9.7	5.6	27	10.5	4.6	.8	.53	N.S.
	Younger	42	9.4	4.7	42	10.9	8.7	1.5	.98	N.S.
Stanford Achievement Test: Word Study Skills	Older	26	28.8	8.8	27	32.1	8.7	3.3	1.37	N.S.
	Younger	42	25.9	5.0	42	32.3	9.3	6.4	4.0	**

[a]6 years 6 months and older.

[b]Less than 6 years 6 months.

**Statistically significant at the .01 level.

TABLE 5

READING ACHIEVEMENT SCORES OF READINESS AND NON-READINESS TRAINED GROUPS ACCORDING TO SEX

Test	Sex group	Readiness trained group N	Mean	S.D.	Non-readiness trained group N	Mean	S.D.	Mean difference	t	Significance
Pretest										
Metropolitan Readiness Test	Boys	34	60.55	14.84	36	60.91	14.18	.36	.10	N.S.
	Girls	34	61.32	16.60	33	64.34	9.56	3.02	.91	N.S.
Posttests-January										
Stanford Achievement Test: Word Reading	Boys	34	12.0	5.66	36	14.2	7.15	2.2	1.46	N.S.
	Girls	34	11.6	4.19	33	14.0	5.59	2.4	2.0	N.S.
Stanford Achievement Test: Paragraph Meaning	Boys	34	9.4	4.75	36	11.1	7.78	1.7	1.13	N.S.
	Girls	34	9.7	5.27	33	10.5	6.90	.8	.61	N.S.
Stanford Achievement Test: Word Study Skills	Boys	34	26.4	6.91	36	33.0	9.05	6.6	3.47	**
	Girls	34	27.8	5.94	33	31.5	8.64	3.7	2.55	N.S.

** Statistically significant at the .01 level.